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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Landmark/District:	<b>Capitol Hill Historic District</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>418-426 C Street NE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	<b>January 28, 2016</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	<b>15-150</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Sarah VanLandingham</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

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Applicant 418-426 Stanton Park LLC with plans prepared by Nelson Architects seeks concept review for the construction of rear additions and roof decks on five rowhouses in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

### **Property Description**

Built in 1892 as a coordinated set of five, the subject properties are three-story brick bay-front rowhouses with distinctive polychrome slate roofs. They are located on the north side of Stanton Park. The rears of the houses have doglegs with small courts. There has been little alteration to either the fronts or rears of these buildings. A two-story carriage house is located at the rear of 418.

The properties were previously used as office space and were combined through internal connections.

### **Proposal**

This project consists of returning the five rowhouses to residential use. Each one will be its own unit but the whole project will be organized as a condominium. The plans call for adding small rear additions to each that would fill in the small court and extend 10' beyond the existing rear wall. This would result in a continuous rear wall that is broken down into rowhouse modules so that the rear reads less like an apartment building from 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The rear elevation will be clad in brick with large windows and doors with Juliet balconies.

The plans also call for adding private roof decks with penthouse access structures to each house. The roof decks will be setback approximately 11 feet from the front walls of each building. There is no significant setback shown from the sidewalls. The materials for the railings are not called out specifically but the drawings seem to show horizontal cable rails. Each roof deck would include a penthouse access structure with bathroom. For zoning compliance, these will be connected across the roofs by open trellises.

The historic facades of the buildings will be retained but the original recessed entry doors will be brought out to the front wall to enclose the original vestibules.

## **Evaluation**

These five rowhouses are remarkably intact and retain most of their original exterior details. This, along with their very visible location, makes it especially important that any alterations be clearly compatible with the character of the buildings. The proposed additions are modest and subordinate. Since they will be visible from the rear, the use of brick as a cladding material is appropriate and will blend in well with the historic district.

This location on Stanton Park provides long sightlines, due both to the expanse of open park space and the width of Massachusetts and Maryland avenues, and the proposed roof decks and penthouses will be visible from a number of vantage points around the park. As such, this aspect of the proposal is not consistent with the Board's requirement that roof decks, stair enclosures and railing not be visible from public view. In May 2015 the Board reviewed a proposal for a new deck and penthouse structure at 134 13<sup>th</sup> Street SE (HPA 15-127). In that case the penthouse would have been visible from one vantage point in the rear from Independence Avenue. The Board found the proposed penthouse addition to be incompatible due to its visual alteration to the consistent roofline of the largely intact row. In this case, the penthouses will have a far greater visual impact from a number of locations, including but not limited to the intersection of C Street and Maryland Avenue, 5<sup>th</sup> Street looking at the project from the rear, and across Stanton Park during the winter when there are no leaves on the trees. Adding the penthouses will detract from the prominence of the historic rooflines—a character defining feature.

The plans indicate the roof deck railing on the East side will also be quite visible. The Board has previously found that roof decks are not compatible when they are prominently visible from public space.

Although the open vestibules were original features to the building, the proposal to pull the doors forward to the face of the building will not have a significant impact on the character or integrity of these structures, and is not an incompatible or unusual treatment for Capitol Hill rowhouses.

## **Recommendation**

*The HPO recommends the Board find the concept of the rear additions to be compatible with the Capitol Hill Historic District but find the penthouses and railings to be incompatible due to their visibility.*